

Message Text

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12
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

SAJ-01 ACDA-07 /080 W
----- 077903

P R 301109Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2222
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 16522

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTION: THE FINAL DAYS

REF: BONN 16032 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS IN THE
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FINAL WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN SHOW A TREND IN FAVOR OF THE

COALITION. THEY ALSO INDICATE THAT 42 PERCENT (COMPARED TO 26 PERCENT FOR THE CDU) BELIEVE THE SPD/FDP COALITION WILL WIN THE ELECTION. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO ADVERSARIES IN ALL THE POLLS FALL WITHIN THE STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR. IF ONE ACCEPTS THE VALIDITY OF POLLS AS A TOOL FOR PREDICTING ELECTION RESULTS, IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL EKE OUT A NARROW VICTORY ON SUNDAY. HOWEVER, BOTH SCHMIDT AND KOHL, IN PRIVATE AS WELL AS IN PUBLIC, CLAIM THEY WILL BE VICTORIOUS, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH JOURNALISTS, POLITICIANS AND PARTY WORKERS ALSO INDICATE THAT IT IS SIMPLY TOO CLOSE TO CALL. CLEARLY THERE HAS BEEN A CONSERVATIVE WAVE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC SINCE 1972. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THIS WAVE WILL CARRY THE UNION PARTIES TO AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OR WILL THEY FALL JUST SHORT OF THAT. WHATEVER HAPPENS, THE POLITICAL CONSTELLATION IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WILL BE CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN IS LIKELY TO BE IN FLUX. IF THE RESULTS ARE AS CLOSE AS EXPECTED, CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAMS SHOULD BE HELD UP UNTIL THE RESULTS ARE CONFIRMED. END SUMMARY.

1. OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS A TREND IN FAVOR OF THE COALITION PARTIES HAS BECOME EVIDENT IN MOST PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. IN THE MAJORITY OF POLLS THE GOVERNMENT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE A SLIGHT EDGE. ACCORDING TO "DER SPIEGEL," CONTRARY TO LAST JULY, MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT WILL WIN ON OCTOBER 3 THAN BELIEVE IN AN OPPOSITION VICTORY (42 PERCENT TO 26 PERCENT). KOHL AND HIS STAFF DISPUTE THESE POLLS BECAUSE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THEY WERE TAKEN BEFORE THE SWEDISH ELECTION. IN ANY EVENT, THE DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETWEEN THE ADVERSARIES IN ALL OF THE POLLS FALLS WITHIN THE STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR.

2. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MAJOR CANDIDATES WHO CLAIM CERTAIN VICTORY, MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS FEEL IT IS TOO CLOSE TO CALL. SCHMIDT CLAIMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CERTAIN TO RECEIVE AT LEAST A 14 TO 16

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SEAT MAJORITY (BRANDT CLAIMS 20-25), AND HE APPEALS TO SPD SUPPORTERS TO TURN OUT THE VOTE AND MAKE THE MARGIN EVEN GREATER. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER ON HIS "SONDERZUG," SCHMIDT SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THE MAXIMUM POTENTIAL FOR THE SPD/FDP IS 52 PERCENT AND THE UPPER LIMIT FOR THE CDU/CSU IS 48 PERCENT BECAUSE ONLY ONCE IN A FEDERAL ELECTION HAS THE CDU/CSU REACHED 48 PERCENT (NOTE: IN 1957 WHEN THE CDU/CSU RECEIVED 50.2

PERCENT). HE DOES NOT EXPECT THE UNION PARTIES OR THE COALITION TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL IN THE 1976 ELECTION. KOHL FOR HIS PART IS EQUALLY CONVINCED THAT THE CDU/CSU CAN AT THE VERY LEAST OBTAIN AS MANY SEATS AS THE COALITION PARTIES (I.E., 248-248).

3. IN THE HEAVILY POPULATED RUHR AREA WHICH COULD DECIDE THE ELECTION, THE KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION HAS PUBLISHED THE RESULTS OF A QUICK PUBLIC OPINION POLL ("BLITZUMFRAGE") WHICH INDICATED THAT OPINION WAS EQUALLY DIVIDED IN THE RUHR AS TO WHETHER BIEDENKOPF'S CHARGES OF TRADE UNION ABUSES WERE JUSTIFIED OR NOT (48 PERCENT

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

ACDA-07 IO-13 /080 W

----- 077964

P R 301109Z SEP 76

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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- 48 PERCENT). AT THE SAME TIME, OVER 93 PERCENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED BELIEVE THAT THE TRADE UNIONS SUPPORT THE SPD. ALL THIS SAID, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER TRADE UNION MEMBERS WILL VOTE CDU EVEN IF THEY AGREE THAT SOME OF BIEDENKOPF'S CHARGES ARE CORRECT. KURT LIEPELT, CONFIDENTIAL

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DIRECTOR OF INFAS, AN SPD MEMBER, CLAIMS THAT HIS POLLS INDICATE THAT BIEDENKOPF HAS AWAKENED THE LETHARGIC LOCAL SPD ORGANIZATIONS IN THE RUHR WHICH WILL HURT THE CDU ON OCTOBER 3.

4. UNION PARTIES EXPECT TO MAKE GAINS OVER 1972 ON THEIR SOUTHERN FLANK: BAVARIA, RHINELAND-PALATINATE AND BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, AND THE CDU NOW BELIEVES IT IS POSSIBLE IN THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WILL WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN HESSE, PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE SCANDAL SURROUNDING MINISTER-PRESIDENT OSSWALD. THEREFORE, A GAIN OF A FEW PERCENTAGE POINTS IN THE RUHR COULD GIVE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESTAG.

5. ON THURSDAY EVENING THE LONG AWAITED TV APPEARANCE OF THE FOUR LEADERS (SCHMIDT, KOHL, STRAUSS AND GENSCHER) WILL TAKE PLACE, AND UP TO TWENTY MILLION GERMANS ARE EXPECTED TO WATCH THE PROGRAM. GIVEN THE CLOSENESS OF THE RACE, THE DISCUSSION COULD HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE FINAL OUTCOME. PREVIOUS TV APPEARANCES BY THE CANDIDATES DREW MIXED RESPONSES DEPENDING MOSTLY UPON THE POLITICAL PREDILECTION OF THE VIEWER.

6. MANY FRG OBSERVERS ARE EXPRESSING GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PRINCIPALS IN THIS BUNDESTAG ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAVE AVOIDED SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF MANY OF THE MAIN ISSUES FACING THE BONN GOVERNMENT DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. THE FDP INTELLECTUAL, RALF DAHRENDORF, SUMMED THIS CONCERN UP IN AN INTERESTING RECENT TWO-PART SERIES IN "DIE ZEIT," WHICH CASTIGATED THE CANDIDATES FOR NOT ATTACKING SUCH PRESSING IMPORTANT DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS AS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE EVOLVING NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONSHIP

AND THE CONCOMITANT GROWING PRESSURE ON THE FRG TO WORK CLOSER WITH THE OTHER EC COUNTRIES THAN WITH THE U.S. IN FACING THIS CHALLENGE.

7. EVEN IF THE CDU/CSU DOES NOT EMERGE VICTORIOUS ON OCTOBER 3, IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE UNION PARTIES WILL HAVE THE LARGEST FRAKTION IN THE BUNDESTAG.
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THIS MEANS THE GOVERNMENT WILL CERTAINLY BE OPERATING WITH A SMALLER MAJORITY THAN IT HAS HAD SINCE 1972 (46 SEATS) AND THUS THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN WILL BE MORE FLUID THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS. A NEW CONSTELLATION OF POLITICAL FORCES IS EXPECTED TO EMERGE AND HELMUT KOHL, AT THE VERY LEAST, WILL HAVE A POWER BASE BUILT UPON THE LARGEST FRAKTION IN THE BUNDESTAG ON THE ONE HAND AND CDU/CSU CONTROL OF THE BUNDESRAT ON THE OTHER. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER KOHL WILL COME TO BONN TO LEAD THE BUNDESTAG FRAKTION SHOULD THE CDU FAIL TO OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, OR IF HE WILL REMAIN IN MAINZ AND USE HIS SEAT ON THE BUNDESRAT FOR A NATIONAL FORUM.

8. IF THE ELECTION TURNS OUT TO BE AS CLOSE AS IS NOW EXPECTED, IT WOULD BE WISE FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO HOLD OFF SENDING CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAMS UNTIL THE EMBASSY CAN CONFIRM WHO THE WINNER IS.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COALITION GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, ELECTION FORECASTS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BONN16522
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760368-1024
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976094/aaaaadba.tel
Line Count: 255
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BONN 16032
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTION: THE FINAL DAYS
TAGS: PINT, GE, CDU, SFD, FDP
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006